

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 21, 2011) – Today Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued the following response to President Obama’s speech to the United Nations General Assembly.

“Today, President Barack Obama clearly restated the U.S. commitment to negotiated peace and the protection of human rights. In his remarks to the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President emphasized the importance not just of peace, but of human dignity and economic opportunity.

In particular, President Obama again demonstrated that he is a true and steadfast friend of Israel, and reiterated that “America’s commitment to Israel’s security is unshakeable, and our friendship with Israel is deep and enduring.” Like the President, I am a strong supporter of a two-state solution. I look forward to a future in which a Palestinian state exists in peace alongside the Jewish state of Israel. But as the President emphasized at the UN today, a genuine, true, and lasting peace can only be reached through negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians themselves.

I strongly support the President’s diplomatic leadership and efforts to convince the Palestinians and their international allies to abandon efforts to use the UN to bypass negotiations with Israel,

and I join him in urging them to return to the talks with the Israelis. While we acknowledge that the conflict will not be resolved easily and that it will require difficult sacrifices from both parties, it is only through direct peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians themselves that a lasting solution can be found. There can be no substitute for such negotiations. As the President stated today in New York, "Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the UN."

In his speech today, the President recognized the legitimate desires of the Palestinian people for a state, with recognized borders and opportunities for economic growth. I share his commitment to working toward that goal. But, as he also emphasized, any peace agreement must acknowledge and address the ongoing security threats faced daily by Israel, and be based on a recognition that Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

Instead of appealing to the UN, the parties need to return to the table. A lasting peace cannot and will not be imposed by any external party; it must be reached by Israelis and Palestinians themselves, with regional and international support and strong, farsighted involvement by the United States."

###

CONTACT: Adjoa Adofo; 202.225.2111
adjoa.adofo@mail.house.gov